



NewsLight

Your community. Your legacy.

A newsletter for contributors and friends of the Virginia Community Foundation

Summer 2018

Vol. 21, No. 1

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NewsLight

NewsLight is the official semi-annual publication of the Virginia Community Foundation.

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Questions, comments or donations may be sent to:
Virginia Community Foundation,
P.O. Box 559, Virginia, MN 55792
218-749-8239

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www.virginiafoundation.com

Restoring Olcott Park

In April 2015 a small article in the *Mesabi Daily News* announced that an Ad Hoc committee was being formed with the stated purpose of restoring the Olcott Park Fountain to good working order. With that first meeting on April 29, 2015, over three years ago, the journey of restoring the fountain began.

The dedicated group of individuals that formed the Olcott Park Fountain Restoration Committee in collaboration with the Virginia Community Foundation has been meeting monthly since then planning and executing fund raising events to make the restoration a reality.

The initial goal of the committee was to raise \$400,000 through private donations and seek grants for the remaining \$500,000 of the

then estimated total project cost of \$900,000.

Over the past three years more than 1,400 donors have enthusiastically come forward to help us reach and exceed our stated goal. At the end of April 2018 private donations totaling \$522,336 have been received.

The donations have come from individuals from the area, across the state and throughout the nation, local businesses, local unions, and local corporations big and small. The response has been tremendous.

On the grant side of the fund raising efforts, a grant application in the amount of \$300,000 submitted to the IRRRB in 2017 was approved in November 2017.

Along with the private donors and

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Message from the Chair

Executive Director Ronda Harvey for her dedication in keeping the Foundation moving forward in the right direction.

Over the past two years, the Foundation has grown in several designated areas; field of interest, scholarship and local project funds. Since its inception the Virginia Community Foundation has grown to over \$4.5 million in assets.

One project fund that has been most visible within the city is the Olcott Park Fountain Restoration. Fund. The fountain project (which is in its final stage) will be completed early this Fall. I would like to recognize the Olcott Park Fountain Committee for their countless volunteer hours and determination to complete this monumental project. I'm always amazed by the committee's creative fundraising activities and I'm personally looking forward to the second Olcott Park Brewfest on August 18, 2018.

The Virginia Community Foundation manages three established academic scholarship funds including the George Munig, Garrett Plotnik, and Marvin

Skaurud scholarships. I recently had the pleasure of presenting seven scholarships to Virginia High School Seniors totaling over \$31,000. Congratulations to William Kuete, Christine Hafdahl, Annie Bachschneider, Alli Seppala and Madison Hokkanen for their hard work, and best wishes to these students in their future academic endeavors.

There are many opportunities to help the Virginia Community Foundation grow, and financial support from local citizens is always needed and appreciated. Check out our website at www.virginiafoundation.com for upcoming events and fundraisers. Exciting information is coming soon from the hard working Virginia Mural Fund Committee.

There are several ways to contribute. Please call or stop by our office at 519 Chestnut Street, Virginia, Minnesota, and ask Terri or Ronda about the Virginia Community Foundation Legacy Fund and how you can become part of the continuing growth of the Virginia Community Foundation.

It has been an honor to serve as the Virginia Community Foundation board chair for the past year and a half. Over the past two years, the Foundation has gone through a period of transition in order to get its policies, best practices, and procedures better aligned with the most current state and federal regulations.

I want to thank the 10-member board of directors and staff for bending, but not breaking, during this transition. A special thank you goes to

Save-the-Date- Festival of Trees is back!

When thinking of a fundraiser for this coming year, one past event that was missed last year kept on creeping in my mind. An event with a 17-year long standing tradition of kicking off the start of the holiday season with trees, tour of homes, holiday luncheons and fun, was an easy choice to try to rekindle. It took one meeting with myself, Essentia, the City of Virginia, and our Chamber and we are planning the 18th annual Festival of Trees. Of course each once of us sponsoring will take a piece of the event and make it our own. The event dates for this year will be November 14th- 17th and

will be held at the Virginia Elks. We are planning to bring back many favorite events and also add new and exciting things to the list of events. The committee is excited to collaborate on an event that will focus around community, family and the holiday season. Plans are underway to kick-off the event with Business after Hours, a wine and cheese event, Tour of Homes, a holiday luncheon and breakfast with Santa and more. This event is also going to include the downtown and quad city merchants as well as a Christmas tree lighting, sleigh rides, and an evening Holiday-themed parade. There will something for



everyone....so please save the date to join us for a wonderful event.

If you have any question on the event or how you can volunteer please call 218-749-8239 (Virginia Community Foundation).

Foundation Friend Leaves a Legacy



In July of 2016, Virginia lost a true patron of the arts, a gifted musician, and a true pillar in our community, Robert Baldrice. Bob's death came without warning as he and his wife, Barbara, were having coffee one evening after the Northern Lights concert at B'nai Abraham synagogue. His death was a shock to all, and our community is not the same without him. Bob was many things, to many people; he was a family man, a joke teller, a musician, a golfer, he was witty, kind, gentle and had a great sense of humor. To us he was community-minded and one of Virginia's finest talents. He was a friend to all.

Bob taught music at the Eveleth Schools, he was the director of the Mesabi Community Orchestra, a member of the "Five Seasoned Brass", and he served as the band director for the Keewatin City Band, the Virginia City Band, and the Mesabi Community Band for decades. Together he and Barb were co-presidents of the Arrowhead Concert Series Association and owned and operated the Schmitt Music Store. They touched many generations of musicians and the two are credited with bringing big city culture to our small community.

Bob could often be heard playing "Taps" at many funerals throughout the years and he often added the sounds of the trumpet to numerous weddings, concerts and parades. He left a legacy of musical talent and teachings, and all that knew him and his talent will never forget what they learned from him. In later years Bob worked alongside the men and women at Bauman funeral home and became a friend and confident to many. Words such as kind, sincere, and friendly are often used to describe how Bob handled each and every customer.



In July of 2017 during the Virginia City Band and the Mesabi Community Band concert the band shell at the Olcott Park was dedicated to Bob Baldrice. The event was attended by his family and many of his past students. It is only fitting that the City of Virginia would name the bandstand The Bob Baldrice Bandstand, after all, Bob was the musical beat of the Range – his name synonymous with music.

Bob was many things to many people. To his family, he was an amazing husband and father. Bob was a friend of the Foundation and served as a board member for 8 years. His love for the community and the Virginia Community Foundation lead to his family donating all of Bob's memorial bequests to the general endowment of the foundation. The Virginia Community Foundation accepts bequests on behalf of everyone. All legacy funds are appreciated and a great way to support your community.

Our area's music man may be gone, but Bob Baldrice is far from forgotten.

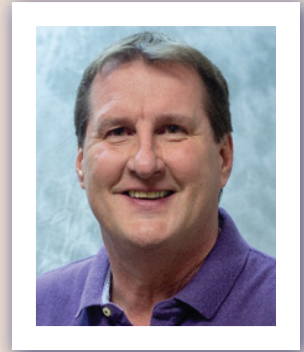


Foundation Welcomes New Board Members

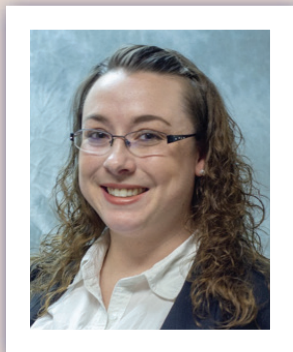
I grew up in Angora and I am a graduate of Cook High School. I attended Mesabi Community College and the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis where I graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Mining Engineering. I worked at the former Erie Mining Company as an Engineer for 5 years before attending UMD where I graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Applied Mathematics with a teaching certification. I started a teaching career in Cook in 1985. I also taught in Cotton, at Mesabi Community College, and ended 32 years of teaching at Hibbing High School. I retired last June. I have been a certified basketball official for over 30 years and also have officiated football and baseball.

My wife of almost 32 years, Robin, and I have lived in the Midway neighborhood for 29 years. We have one daughter Dr. Brittany (Nate) Ortler and one three year old granddaughter Kinlee. Robin is the Executive Director of the East Range DAC in Eveleth and Brittany is an Advanced Practice Clinician for Essentia Health in Duluth. Nate works at United Taconite.

I look forward to working with all the other Board members and staff at the Virginia Community Foundation and serving the business owners and citizens of Virginia. It has been a challenging and rewarding experience so far.



Anthony Harkonen



Leah Ryan

Leah Ryan is proud to be one of the newest members of the Virginia Community Foundation Board.

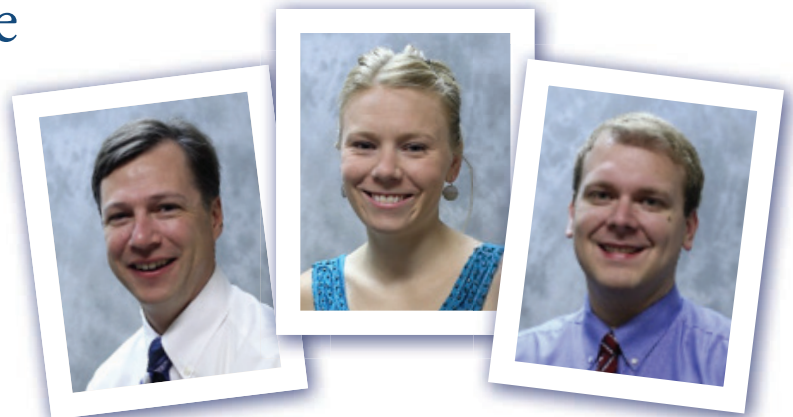
Leah received her dual Bachelor of Arts degrees in Communication and Spanish from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN. She earned a Masters of Arts in Communication Studies from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL. After moving home to Williston, ND, and experiencing the oil boom, Leah and her husband moved to Eveleth where they bought a home and have a life.

Leah works at the *Mesabi Daily News* as a reporter and columnist where she informs and entertains the community. She is active in her church and is leading the creation of Friends of the Eveleth Library, which she currently chairs.

Leah and her husband (Jerry) are foster parents. They nurture love and curiosity while raising our community's children. Their goal is to raise responsibly engaged community citizens and do this by living a good example.

Thank YOU for Your Service

Saying goodbye to a board member is a bit like saying goodbye to your family. This year, we at the Foundation would like to say a heartfelt thank-you to 3 board members that were forced to leave due to their hectic life schedule. **Andrew Peterson of Cope & Peterson Ltd, Catherine Brannville of Irma's Finland House and Greg Niska from Northern State Bank will be greatly missed.** These three strong, committed and community-minded individuals worked hard during three years of transition at the Foundation. Early morning meetings, countless emails to read, hard-made decisions as well as a dedication to the Virginia Community Foundation and the City of Virginia were all greatly appreciated. We cannot thank them enough. On the bright side, all three board members departed



promising to return once their lives slowed down. We look forward to you rejoining the family soon! Thank you for your service.

Murals Murals Murals

Greetings from the Mural Committee! Yes, more murals are on the way to downtown Virginia! We committee members and the Foundation Director are working to secure buildings for mural themes.

Currently we have chosen a Silver Lake Beach theme for the Rocket Liquor's backside. We are researching and gathering photos to be used by the

contributions to the Mural Fund.

The City of Virginia has 2 Pocket Parks for Chestnut Street in the works this year. They will be located at 529 Chestnut Street and 418 Chestnut Street. We expect to use and assist with the logging and mining themes at these 2 locations. We are committed to improving and revitalizing our downtown Virginia.

Cruising the Main Street Mural, the Ojibwe Mural and the Blue Devils Mural. We hope to eventually offer tours of our beautiful murals. Thank you for taking pride in Virginia! And we still have space available on both the Marty and the Athletic Murals. If you want information on how to purchase either, call the Foundation.

The Mural Fund Advisory



mural artist. We have several potential sites in the works and a great number of themes including parades, logging, mining, gardening, grade schools, Steve's Burgers, Mineview in the Sky, and special groups/clubs i.e. Rotary, Italian American, Kaleva Hall. Input is always welcome from our Foundation supporters.

Creating quality murals involves using quality artists. We will be taking bids on these projects as they progress. If you know of anyone who might fit our needs, please contact the Foundation for additional information on the process.

The Foundation does not pay property owners to have a mural installed but recognizes that these will improve the value of the building for the owner. Our murals can cost anywhere from \$10,000 to \$25,000 (Est), so we seek donations from the community. These contributions can be made by being part of the mural – paying for an image – or by general

Our mural history began in 2008 and since then a total of 8 murals have been erected. They include the Koski Brothers Mural, the Marty Biondich Mural, the Veterans Mural, Canelakes Mural, the Marching Blues Mural,

Committee consists of Chair Lindsey Heisel, Secretary Lori Maki, Alicia Cope, Jeanette Carlson, Katrina Bird, Tracy Baldrice, Kara Petron, Greg Niska and VCF Liaison, Carol Sundquist.

Restoring Olcott Park

continued from front page

the IRRRB grant, the City of Virginia budgeted \$50,000 in both 2017 and 2018 for fountain restoration.

And the fund raising continues. The Olcott Park Brewfest Committee has announced that the 2nd annual brewfest will be held on August 18, 2018 at Olcott Park. Last year's event was a big hit with everyone, and this year's event promises to be just as much fun.

We are now at the point where fountain restoration work can begin. Some work was initiated in 2017. Necessary tree and shrub removal was

begun, tuck pointing was done on the fountain cone, and a new fountain spray system was ordered.

Our goal this summer is to get the fountain operating (phase I). Hooray!!! This is what we've all been waiting for. Weather, of course, will be a big factor. The restoration of the observation deck, sidewalks, and retaining wall (phase II) is also scheduled for this summer.

The Olcott Park Fountain Restoration Committee would like to thank everyone for the support shown for this project.

Virginia Community Foundation receives IRRRB grant for Downtown Revitalization

During the past two years the Virginia Community Foundation has been working with an independent consultant on a strategic plan and we were reminded that one of our main goals was our beloved downtown, Chestnut Street. It was during this process that we realized the need to collaborate with the downtown merchants and community members to begin the discussion of “what” and then “how” do we start to tackle some very difficult issues.

Soon a group of community minded citizens that share a love for Virginia and the Downtown area created a grass roots group called Revive Virginia and relationships were being built to work together to rejuvenate our main street. Events were planned including the annual Martyr Biondich clean-up day, a Christmas

sleigh ride and a tree lighting ceremony.

Before long, ReVive Virginia was approached by the City of Virginia suggesting that the group apply for an IRRRB Downtown Corridor Grant that was created for the sole purpose of revitalizing main streets. Together, The Foundation, The City of Virginia and ReVive Virginia applied for the grant and in November were awarded the full amount possible - \$50,000 with The City of Virginia and the Foundation providing the needed \$50,000 in matching funds.

Until very recently, Revive Virginia was a project fund under the umbrella of the Foundation. The group has applied and been awarded a non-profit status, 501 (c) (3) of their own. Becoming a non-profit, along with help from the Foundation and

the City of Virginia, will allow ReVive Virginia to accomplish its mission more successfully. Plans to rehabilitate old storefronts with grant monies and sell or lease to potential business owners is in the works and currently a storefront located at 118 Chestnut Street is in the process of being refurbished. We are all excited to say the least.

If you would like to know more about Revive Virginia, would like to volunteer or become a member please call our City Administrator Britt See Benes at 748-7500 or Betsy Olivanti at 749-7752. Or if you would like to make a donation to the Downtown Revitalization Fund, checks can be mailed to us at PO Box 559 or visit our website: www.virginiafoundation.com under DONATE NOW.



Greetings friends, donors, and community members. I have been in my position for nearly 3 years and I feel like we have done so much, but it feels like there is still much to do. After a successful 25th anniversary celebration we set our goals on bringing our policies and procedures up-to-date as well as confirming that we are compliant with state laws and regulations. With the help of Consultant Whitney Crettol, I believe the Foundation is in its best shape ever. With that being said; we are prepared to set our goals on increasing our revenue.

The Foundation has had

Message from the Desk of Rudy

several new happenings this year. The Dr. Halvor and Emily Olson Scholarship was bequeathed to the students of ISD #706 and will be awarded in the year 2019 for the first time ever. Our Downtown Revitalization Fund has had a rebirth since the inception of ReVive Virginia, we have several new talented board members and I'm eager to announce that THE FESTIVAL OF TREES is being brought back to Virginia! The Foundation, in collaboration with Essentia Health, The City of Virginia, and The Laurentian Chamber of Commerce, are planning a bigger-than-ever celebration to kick off the holiday season this November.

I'm also excited to tell you that the restoration of the Olcott Park Fountain is becoming a reality. I have witnessed a tremendous amount of love for the fountain this past year and I personally would like to thank each one of you for your donation to the fountain. Whether you donated \$1 or \$50,000, every dollar has been appreciated. The outpouring of gifts and donations, some anonymous, has been overwhelming. The project is currently under construction and we have hopeful plans to host a First Spray Celebration this summer.

Projects such as the Olcott Park Fountain are magnificent and they certainly bring our community together, but please allow me to

tell you of yet another Fund that is equally as important. That is the Virginia Community Foundation Endowment Fund. Do you know that every year the Foundation awards various amounts of grants to non-profits in our community for events and projects that they otherwise may not be able to attain. The Rotary Fishing Contest, Take a Vet Fishing, a pool table at the Senior Center, the renovation of the Lyric Center Storefront, and the Virginia Market Square are just a few of the grants that we've awarded in past years. Our portfolio is currently at nearly 4.6 million dollars and a percentage of the interest gives us the ability to give back to our community.

This year, please consider making a donation to our general endowment fund. If you would like information on how to make a donation, please call me at 218 749-8239 or email me at director@virginiafoundation.com. Likewise, we are always looking for volunteers for upcoming events. You can also go to our website and find additional information regarding the Foundation at www.virginiacommunityfoundation.com.

Without you, our donors, we would not be able to continue to enrich the lives of our community members as well as make Virginia a great place to live, work, and grow.

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED



\$7,500

Marvin Skaurud Scholarship
**Annie Summers
Bachschneider**



\$150

George Munig Scholarship
Madison Hokkanen



\$7,500

Marvin Skaurud Scholarship

\$500

George Munig Scholarship

\$500

Garrett Plotnik Scholarship

William Keute



\$7,500

Marvin Skaurud Scholarship
Alli Seppala



\$7,500

Marvin Skaurud Scholarship
Christine Hafdahl

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virginiafoundation.com/enews

E-newsletter subscriptions will also help us reduce overhead costs such as printing and postage, allowing the Foundation to spend more where it counts – on our community!



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Yes! I want to give something back to Virginia!

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone(s) _____
Gift Amount \$ _____
☐ Enclosed is my check, made payable to the Virginia Community Foundation
☐ Please charge my credit card, using the following credit card information:
Name on the Card _____
Card Number _____
Expiration Date _____ 3-Digit Code _____

Funds will be applied to the foundation's endowment, unless specified below.

- ☐ Virginia Education Fund
- ☐ Blue Pride
- ☐ Virginia Public Library
- ☐ Mural
- ☐ Skaurud Scholarship Fund
- ☐ Fund for the Arts
- ☐ Munig Scholarship
- ☐ Lou's Closet
- ☐ Parks, Lakes and Recreation
- ☐ Plomik Scholarship
- ☐ Downtown Revitalization
- ☐ Olcott Park Fountain

Please return your completed form to: Virginia Community Foundation, PO Box 559, Virginia, MN 55792